R E P O R T R E S U M E S

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TEACHING THE DISADVANTAGED.

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DESCRIPTORS- *DISADVANTAGED YOUTH, *TEACHING TECHNIQUES, *PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS, LANGUAGE ARTS, INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS, STUDENT MOTIVATION, REINFORCEMENT, READING MATERIALS, MATHEMATICS INSTRUCTION, SOCIAL STUDIES, SCIENCE EDUCATION, HEALTH, SCHOOL SERVICES, PARENT TEACHER CONFERENCES, SELF CONCEPT, STAFF ROLE,

GUIDELINES FOR TEACHING AND UNDERSTANDING THE DISADVANTAGED CHILD ARE PRESENTED IN THIS REPORT. SPECIFICALLY DISCUSSED ARE THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISADVANTAGED CHILD, MOTIVATION AND REINFORCEMENT TECHNIQUES, AND TECHNIQUES FOR INSTRUCTING PUPILS IN LANGUAGE ARTS, SOCIAL SCIENCE, SCIENCE, AND MATHEMATICS. THE DUTIES OF VARIOUS MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL'S SUPPORTIVE STAFF ARE ALSO DESCRIBED. (LB)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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TEACHING THE DISADVANTAGED

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introduction

In American society both poverty and wealth exist to a relative degree; yet the mass of the population actually knows little of either. The mass tends to cast the individual in one of two common molds—that of the successful or that of the unsuccessful. Thus it is often necessary for the average American to remind himself that a man may lack money and not be poor, just as a man may possess great wealth and not be rich.

The successful individual in American culture is bound by a definite stereotype. He must be motivated by a compulsion to advance socially, economically, and culturally. He must readily assume responsibility for his family, his community, and his nation. And he must conform to accepted patterns of behavior. If he fits this mold, he is stereotyped as successful.

Unfortunately, however, the nation is not entirely composed of successful individuals; some members of the population are bound by a different stereotype—that of the unsuccessful.

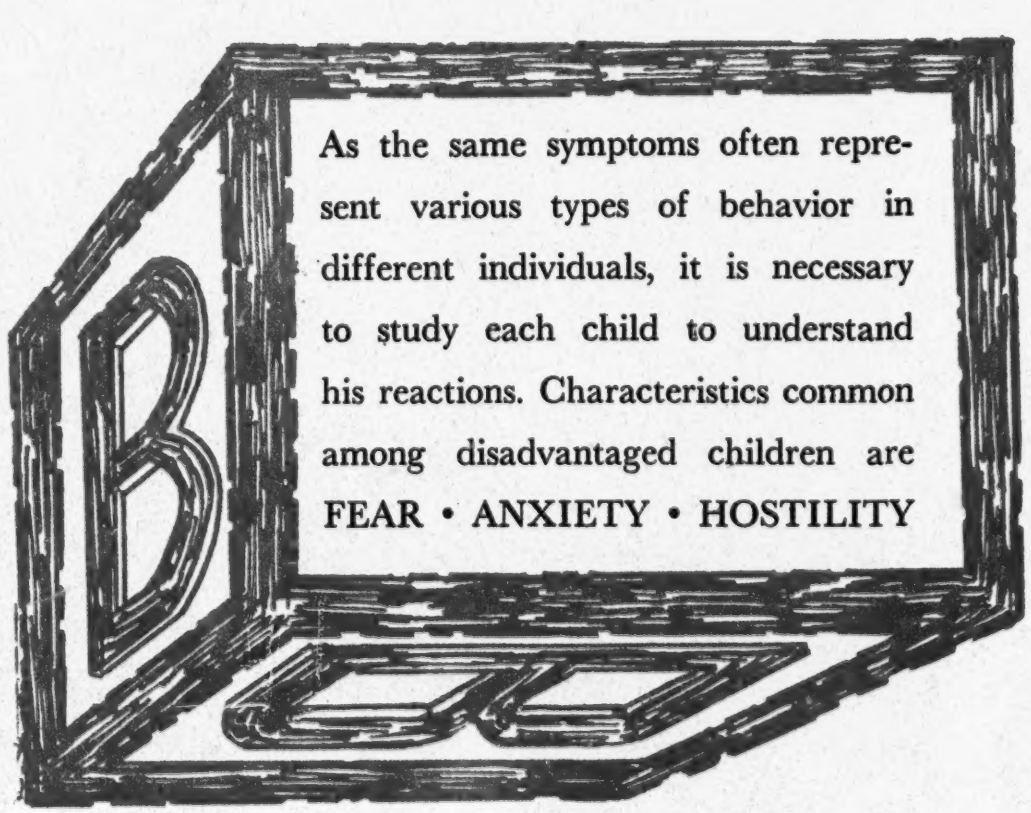
As the population has increased, masses of the affluent have abandoned the inner cities for the suburbs leaving many in the wake of the exodus to grapple with the emergence of new economic, social, and educational standards. Simultaneously, technological advances have rendered ever increasing numbers of nonskilled and common laborers impoverished by paltry wages and unemployment. As they have become economically impoverished, these people have also become culturally and socially deprived. They have found the avenues to success obstructed by insufficient education, undesirable personality factors, or divergent cultural backgrounds. Powerless to find adequate employment, this segment of the population is thrust into the mold of the unsuccessful and thus into a state of hopelessness.

The plight of the deprived is preserved by the fact that their children, upon entering school, find themselves in a strange and unfamiliar world. There they are often stamped as irresponsible, unconcerned about their own problems, and unable to learn; for they have had the opportunity neither to establish the goals and values held by the teacher nor to develop an appreciation for art, music, literature, or education in general. Much of their meager vocabulary consists of words unacceptable to the teacher. Receiving allowances, saving money for college, visiting the theatre and the art museum are experiences with which the disadvantaged child is unacquainted. The daily bath, clean clothing, proper dental hygiene, and careful grooming are frequently avoided in living quarters furnished with inadequate plumbing or no plumbing at all. That these children possess abilities and individual differences within a range similar to that of their more fortunate peers is somehow forgotten by those whose judgments are based upon income and environment.

Finding himself rejected by the school, the underprivileged youth deviates from the behavior accepted by the school. He may reconcile his social failure through illegal acts which tend to further his alienation and isolate him from a socially approved life. Thus the stereotype of the unsuccessful is preserved.

THE DISADVANTAGED CHILD AN OVERVIEW

characteristics


As the same symptoms often represent various types of behavior in different individuals, it is necessary to study each child to understand his reactions. Characteristics common among disadvantaged children are
FEAR • ANXIETY • HOSTILITY

F E A R a reaction to a condition recognized by the individual as harmful. In the case of the disadvantaged child there may be fear of a number of circumstances:

Fear of the Unknown . . .

- NEW ENVIRONMENT
- NEW PERSONNEL
- DIFFERENT STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Fear of Failure . . .

Failure to understand concepts which the teacher assumes have previously been mastered

Failure to understand lessons which are too difficult at the time of presentation

Failure to fulfill parents' expectations

Failure to be accepted by other members of the class

Fear of Unhappy Past Experiences Associated with School . . .

- Frightening stories heard about school
- Unpleasant experiences of having been driven from the schoolyard
- Failure to succeed in previous attempts to learn to read or perform some other educational task

ANXIETY may be defined as fear which has been dislodged from the original stimulus and is, therefore, unattached to a specific situation. It may be caused by stress—the most frequent trigger of pathological behavior. It may be fostered by family arguments or disagreements, insufficient food or clothing, school pressures, or past emotional upsets. In the disadvantaged child, anxiety may manifest itself in a number of ways:

Fatigue, paleness, nervousness, or daydreaming

In the classroom, its effects may be twofold:

Facilitation of learning by rote

Deterrence of problem solving

HOSTILITY may be directed toward the teacher, the pupils, or society as a whole. In the disadvantaged child, it is characterized by many forms of behavior:

Unfriendly behavior . . .

a cold, sullen, noncommunicative response

Uncooperative behavior . . .

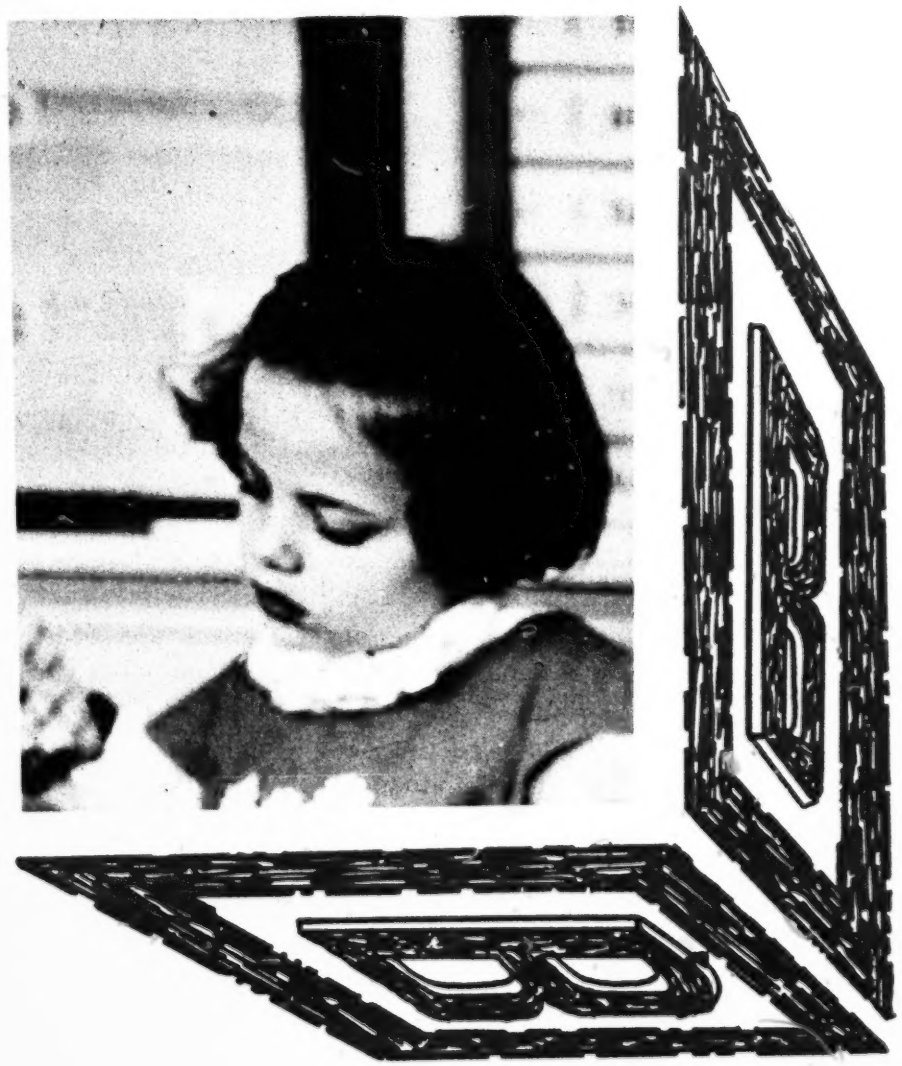
refusal to follow instructions or to conform in class or at play; insistence upon one's own way

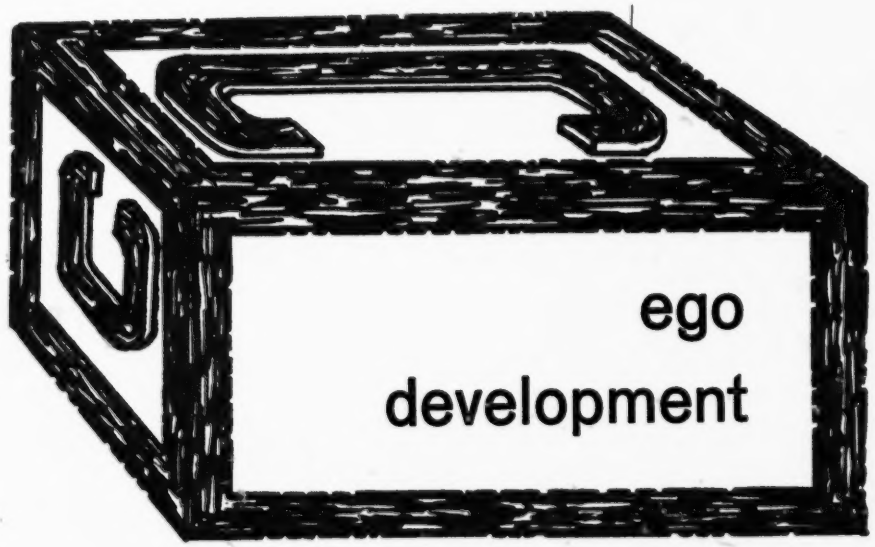
Obstinate behavior . . .

insistence upon doing the opposite of that which one was instructed to do; desire to argue or to seek disagreements or rights

FEAR ANXIETY HOSTILITY

Each may result in withdrawal. The teacher must work diligently to establish and maintain communication WITH EACH PUPIL.





Ego development refers to the changes in an individual's self-concept, self-attitudes, motives, aspirations, self-esteem, and personality traits that affect the realization of his aspirations as he advances in age. There is evidence that it varies from one individual to another. However, the ego development of disadvantaged youth displays certain well-defined characteristics.

These youth usually come from an unstable family structure. Their parents are generally more uncertain, inconsistent, and authoritative than middle-class parents. Their homes may be crowded, busy, noisy places without the presence of "model persons" who can serve as examples for the child to imitate as he grows up. At an early age many of them are no longer dependent upon their parents and in many cases assume adult responsibilities such as caring for younger members of the family and earning money. Their parents and associates do not always place a value on education and do not encourage high aspirations.

They have missed those out-of-school experiences that develop concepts, abilities, and attitudes favorable to school success which are a part of the background of more privileged children. What they are expected to learn in school is too often in conflict with their out-of-school interests, goals, and standards; and hence, their motivation for learning is inhibited.

As the disadvantaged child grows, he is denied the expression of his own interests and abilities so often that he sometimes no longer has a purpose for learning. He has faced so many tasks which have no meaning or understanding for him that he has lost all enthusiasm. He has experienced failure so often that his willingness to try has been replaced with the feeling of futility.

As a result, many of these youngsters question their own self-worth, feel inferior in school, fear new situations, have limited trusts, and have feelings of shame about themselves and their families. Early experiences have convinced many pupils even before they enter school that they are incapable of learning.

The disadvantaged pupil needs help from the school staff if self-respect is to be enhanced and his image of himself as a person worthy of the respect of others is to be developed. The teacher should give him tasks which are suitable to his ability and which can be finished in a short period of time. He must be constantly encouraged and his efforts reinforced by assurances that he can complete the task successfully. When the task is completed successfully, he should be given approval.

Many different cultures have contributed to the making of this country. Each group migrating to the United States has brought with it a body of traditions, mores, and customs that have enriched the lives of all peoples. When the school denies the pupil the privilege of bringing the language and customs of his people into the classroom, this denial is interpreted as a rejection of himself and his family. Educators agree that the school should not destroy the culture of the pupil but should use his background to help him find a place in society. The school should provide opportunity for him to develop pride in the contributions of successful men and women of his group. The teacher can accomplish this task by giving recognition to his holiday customs or using pictures and stories which emphasize interesting customs. This recognition of his cultural differences in a positive and wholesome manner will enhance his image of himself as a person of worth.

These pupils need to be helped to develop an anticipation of success. They have failed so often that they accept failure as a natural result of any attempt to perform tasks assigned by the teacher.

Improving the way a child looks at himself is a slow process requiring patience and understanding on the part of the teacher.

psychological problems

The economically deprived pupil is at a great disadvantage when psychological tests are administered. Because of his lack of experiences and limited vocabulary, he tests fifteen to twenty points lower than does a child from a more privileged home. Consequently, when the teacher uses intelligence test scores as a basis for grouping or planning lessons, the disadvantaged pupil is penalized. It is more realistic to use achievement test scores as a basis for planning.

Behavior problems are no more frequent among the disadvantaged than among other children. However, these children do evidence more anxiety and more instability than their middle class counterparts. Stability is learned from parents, and stability is difficult for a disadvantaged family to achieve under the conditions in which they live. Also, the manner in which the child is permitted to behave at home will influence his behavior at school. Parents of disadvantaged children often hold standards for the child which are different from those held by the teacher. The pupil becomes bewildered when he is punished for an act which the parent condones or ignores but which is considered misbehavior by the teacher.

The teacher can help the disadvantaged pupil with his behavior problems by careful planning of activities, by being consistent in demands and in discipline, and by instituting a regular routine.

Since many poor children come from fatherless homes where only women are in charge, pupils, especially boys, see the teacher as merely another woman and, in their view, an overbearing one. Some undesirable behavior directed toward the teacher is caused by this view. The teacher must show by her attitude and patience that she does not fit the picture that the child has in his mind.

The more advantaged child has many ways to learn what is expected of him. The impoverished child does not have these opportunities. His parents believe in strong punishment to make him approach the norm. Their rules are external; they are not concerned with purposes or the reasons for which rules are made. The teacher's attempts to internalize behavior and to direct the pupil toward self-discipline often meet with failure. Nevertheless, patience, reinforcement of learning, and careful development of the pupil's self-image help to direct the pupil to more positive classroom performance.

health and hygiene

There is much evidence of poor personal hygiene among deprived pupils resulting from their lack of adequate facilities for frequent bathing, for brushing teeth, or for laundering clothes. As a result, many come to school dirty and unkempt. Among these youth, skin infections, malnutrition, frequent colds, and a variety of other health problems are to be expected.

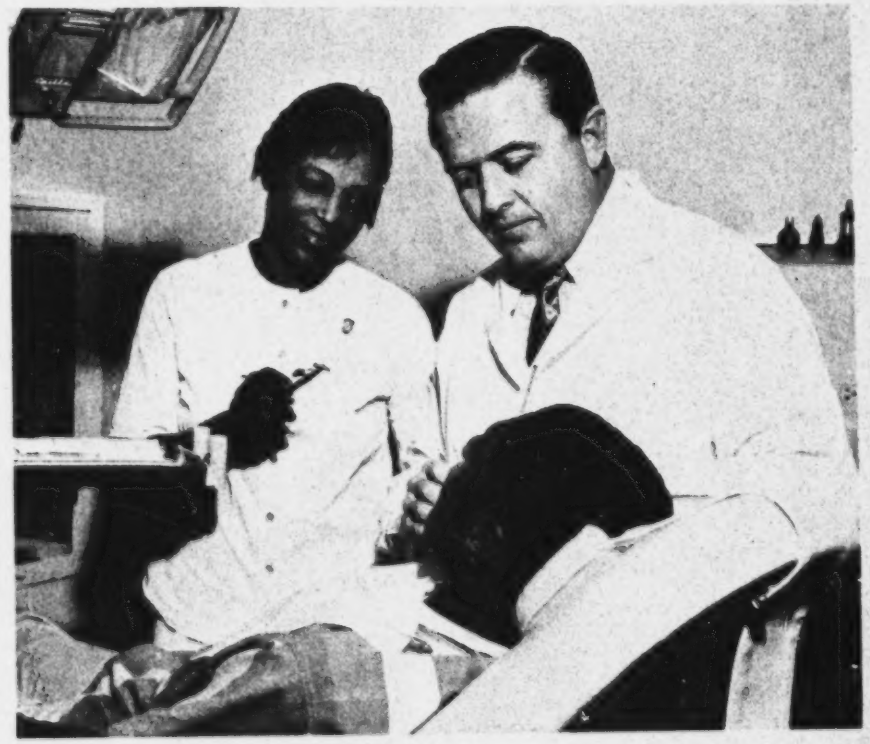
Dental care is practically unknown, and the absence of prenatal care often results in a high rate of tooth decay and related tooth and gum disorders.

Pupils from deprived backgrounds are apt to display one or more of the following health problems:

- *Poor Posture*
- *Limited Muscular Coordination*
- *Passiveness or Hyperactivity*
- *Drowsiness and Fatigue*

These pupils may lack the stamina and energy required to meet accepted standards of achievement in today's classrooms. Because of one or more of these health problems and inadequate clothing, the pupil may frequently be absent from school.

Pupils from deprived homes often become disadvantaged learners as a result of the conditions under which they live. Therefore, it is necessary to use different methods of instruction if they are to profit from the classroom.



communications

Since the family is the major source of pertinent information about the pupil, the school must continually strive for increased communication with the child's parents. By establishing rapport with parents, the teacher can learn about the student's goals, his friends, his fears, his strengths, and his weaknesses.

Well-planned parent-teacher conferences can insure better communication. Many low-income parents feel that they are neither wanted nor needed, so they are reluctant to come to school. Other parents resent becoming involved in the learning or discipline problems of the pupil because they feel that teachers are hostile to parents of nonconforming pupils. A poor attitude on the part of either parent or teacher can have an adverse effect on home-school relations.

Listed below are some suggestions for preparing a conference with the parents:

- *List pertinent questions that the teacher would like the parent to answer.*
- *Provide opportunity for the parent to ask questions about the pupil's school performance.*
- *Be prepared to explain the grading system to the parent.*

While in the conference, the teacher should display a friendly attitude to encourage the parents' cooperation. Whenever possible, specific answers should be given to their questions.

The discussion should be based on the pupil's learning problems and the manner in which they can be solved by teacher and parent working together. The teacher should be honest about the child's potential as evidenced by test results and performance and refrain from giving an exaggerated picture of either the pupil's potential or his problems.

GENERAL TEACHING TECHNIQUES

motivation

Motivation is the key factor in the learning process and is especially significant for deprived pupils. All children come to the classroom with certain basic drives or motives. The object of education is to direct these drives toward academic achievement. Unless the pupil has the desire to learn, the interest to learn, or the drive to learn, his ability to learn is of no significance. Research has demonstrated that the scores on group intelligence tests of disadvantaged youth are rarely reliable as measures of intelligence. The student's learning potential is a better focus for the teacher than the fixed learning ability based on an intelligence quotient.

There appears to be no one best way to motivate pupils to learn, but listed below are many suggestions that seem to be conducive to the establishment of an atmosphere in which learning can be experienced:

- **Establish rapport.**
- Relate to the pupils. Accept them as individuals worthy of respect.
- **Find the natural leaders and seek their support.**
- Be consistent.
- **Be straightforward and direct.**
- Be a model for pupils to imitate in dress, speech, and decorum.
- **Help students develop the belief that they can achieve.**
- Help each find who he is.
- **Discover the pupils' values and employ their values to help them achieve.**
- Be informal and warm in a dignified but simple fashion.
- **Establish an unvarying routine with simple, clear, enforced rules.**
- Build classroom traditions around the goal of learning.
- **Establish step-by-step goals, signposts, and standards.**
- Employ role playing, followed by discussions.
- **Improve the pupil's self-image by providing opportunities for success.**
- Encourage pupils to verbalize about action and things they can see.
- **Employ teaching techniques that stress the visual, the physical, and the active as much as possible.**
- Seek active participation of each pupil in the learning situation.
- **Reinforce socially approved behavior.**
- Be sure that the pupil has mastered and consolidated all ongoing learning tasks before new tasks are introduced.
- **Use structural learning materials optimally organized to facilitate efficient sequential learning.**

The teacher teaches not so much what he KNOWS, but what he IS. He respects his students so that they can respect him.

reinforcement of learning

Not only do disadvantaged pupils need to be motivated to learn, but each step is an important key to learning. Methods of reinforcement vary with the individual, the situation, and the group. Much, if not all, reinforcement of academic learning for disadvantaged children stops at the close of the school day and does not begin again until the beginning of the next school day since the home environment lacks the ingredients for reinforcing academic learning.

The teacher must include in the daily plans a review of material previously taught, testing the pupils' knowledge in a variety of activities and situations and then reteaching if necessary. This process is slow and tedious but is necessary for the pupils' sequential learning.

Experience and activities provided for the individual pupil should be so geared to his ability that he can complete them successfully in a short time. The fact that a pupil has been able to achieve encourages him to try again. All lessons should begin with something which the student has previously learned and mastered.

Rewards are a useful means of reinforcing learning for disadvantaged pupils. Rewards may vary from the tangible piece of candy to an extra play period or a place of leadership in the class. The reward may sometimes have to be immediate depending upon the student's maturity; the teacher should strive to develop the pupil's restraint and to increase the length of the period of waiting.

Punishment is sometimes used for negative reinforcement. Punishment should be discreetly and sparingly used, if it is used at all. A thorough knowledge of the child's background is necessary before inflicting any form of punishment. The student's cumulative records, the counselor, the nurse, and the principal should be consulted for helpful information. Many authorities believe that tangible and intangible rewards are more effective than punishment.

Many of the objects and experiences to which more privileged children are exposed may be completely unfamiliar to the disadvantaged child. Several methods to broaden the cultural background have been used successfully in Head Start Programs and should be continued at every grade level.

A *wide variety of objects and pictures* should be provided in the classroom. The teacher should encourage his students to inspect them.

Auditory and visual aids such as transparencies, slides, bulletin boards, films, filmstrips, and tape and disc recordings should be available and used to stimulate learning.

Educational tours to the Museum of Fine Arts, the Music Hall, the Museum of Natural Science, the Burke Baker Planetarium, the Herman Park Zoo, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration can expand the horizons of children who have never left their own neighborhoods.

TEACHING TECHNIQUES FOR SPECIFIC AREAS

language arts

The language arts is an area in which deprived pupils have great difficulty. Because of their meager vocabulary, their lack of ability to organize information, and their poor auditory and visual discrimination, they find the development of good skills and habits almost impossible. The careful teacher will begin with listening and oral communication skills before formal reading is attempted.

Listening Since many deprived children have not learned to listen discriminately and cannot distinguish certain sounds and identify them, a variety of listening experiences should be planned for them. Some activities are listed below:

- *Listening to stories and poetry*
- *Listening to sounds of nature or sounds of the school*
- *Listening to other children talk*
- *Listening to music*
- *Listening in a group*
- *Listening to his own recorded voice*
- *Listening to flannel board stories*
- *Listening for his own name when a list of names is read*
- *Listening to the naming of objects in the room*
- *Listening to the names of other children*
- *Playing games involving listening*

Deprived pupils may also have problems in speaking. Often they respond to a request with a single word or a short phrase. The teacher must provide many opportunities for each individual to participate in conversation.

Speaking **Some oral activities in which these pupils could participate are listed below:**

- *Using concrete materials to promote conversation*
- *Relating past experiences*
- *Expressing reactions to certain stories*
- *Giving reactions to certain words, such as "green," "clown"*
- *Talking about one's own family*
- *Giving items in sequence*
- *Using games for repeating words*
- *Talking about pictures*
- *Building sentences with the class*
- *Saying names of other children*
- *Reciting nursery rhymes or other verses*

As the pupils become more skilled in listening and speaking, the oral activities should be designed to demand that the pupil think about and plan his participation in the activity. The teacher promotes thinking and planning by such activities as the following:

- *Asking "why" and "how" questions*
- *Involving the class in group thought procedure using flannel boards, riddles, and the like*
- *Using "walking sentences" (Each child represents a certain word and stands in the proper place.)*
- *Using art activities, such as easel, cut-outs, etc.*
- *Dramatizing stories and poems*
- *Making and using puppets*
- *Studying pictures and telling or writing stories about them*
- *Developing imagination through poetry*

Reading The love of books is the greatest gift a school can give, and the teacher who understands his students' needs will lead his students to books which broaden their minds, quicken their senses, and lift their spirits.

Books for the disadvantaged learner must be chosen with great care. Since reading is distasteful to him, he is reluctant to begin a book that he thinks is dull or too lengthy. The teacher might choose a book the pupil might enjoy, read a portion of it to him until he is interested, then give it to him to finish.

With care the teacher can introduce a balanced reading program: books that will make the student laugh, books that make him appreciate beauty, books that help him understand that other people have problems. Reading is to help the pupil do his own thinking, develop his own ideas, and broaden his cultural horizons.

Listed below are a few of the many books that teachers have used successfully with disadvantaged readers.

Books to make him laugh and feel comfortable:

- *Mr. Popper's Penguins*—Richard Atwater (Little)
- *The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins*—Dr. Seuss (Vanguard)

Books to build his self-image:

- *Judy's Journey*—Lois Lenski (Lippincott)
- *Sensible Kate*—Doris Gates (Viking)
- *Old Con and Patrick*—Ruth Sawyer (Viking)
- *Melendy's Medal—Georgene Faulkner* (Messner)
- *Two Is A Team*—Jerrold Beim (Harcourt)

Books to help him identify with his environment:

- *Come Be My Friend* (Hale)
- *Skid*—Florence Hayes (Houghton-Mifflin)
- *The New Boy*—Mary Winston (Doubleday)
- *Blue Willow*—Doris Gates (Viking)

Books to give him correct point-of-view:

- *What Do You Say, Dear?*—Sesyle Joslin (Scott)
- *What Do You Do, Dear?*—Sesyle Joslin (Scott)
- *The Latch Key Club*—Eleanor Clymer (McKay)
- *A Sundae for Judy*—Frieda Friedman (Morrow)
- *A Tree for Peter*—Kate Seredy (Viking)

Books to make him a useful citizen:

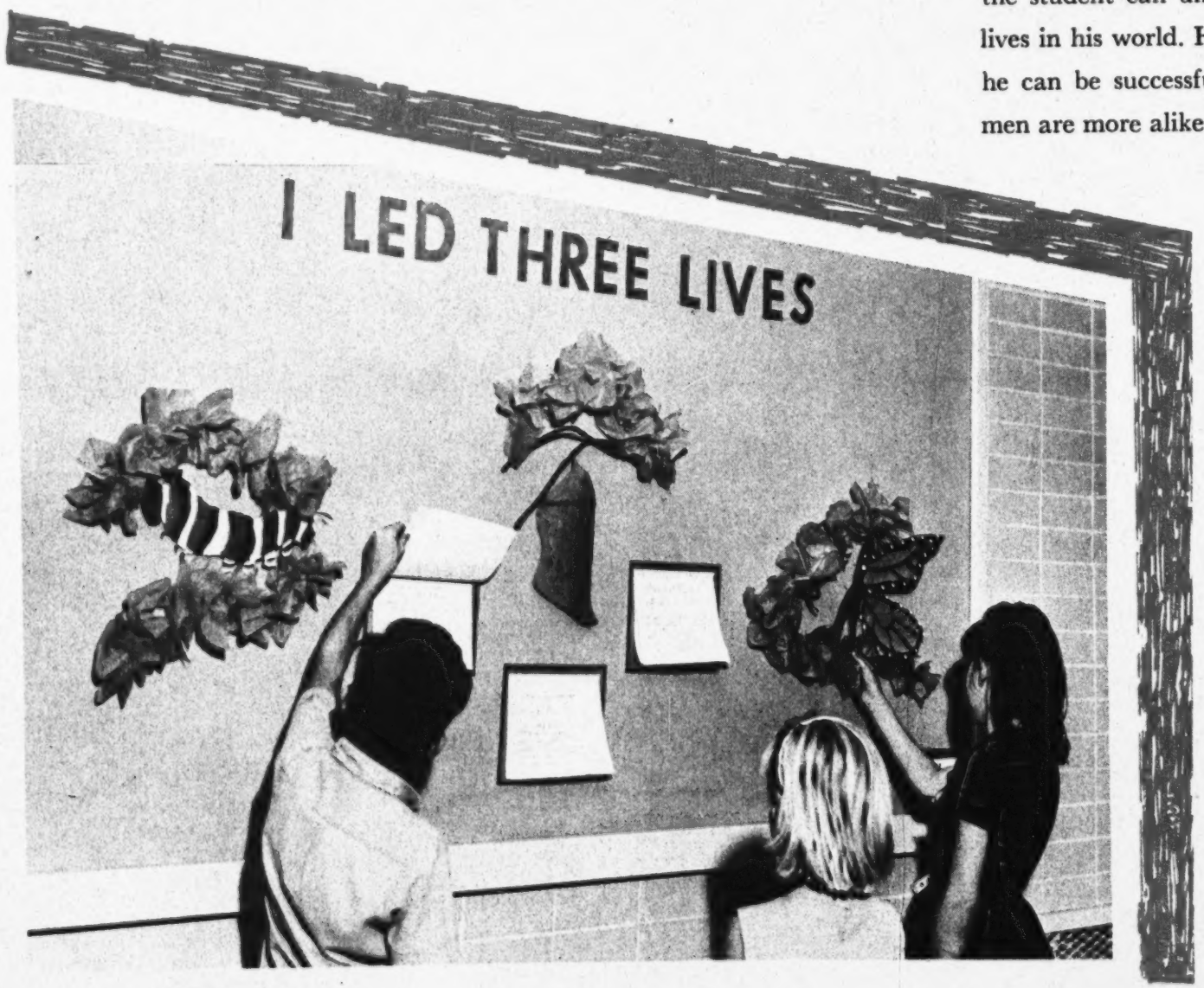
- *They Were Strong and Good*—Robert Lawson (Viking)
- *All-American*—John R. Tunis (Harcourt)
- *Roosevelt Grady*—Eleanor Shotwell (World)
- *Mamma Hattie's Girl*—Lois Lenski (Lippincott)

social science

In social studies classes the pupil develops certain basic concepts. Even in kindergarten he can begin to understand that everyone has certain basic needs, problems, and characteristics regardless of his economic status. The social studies program should be developmental in nature, and non-reading activities should be stressed when possible. This program should help the pupil understand the world in which he lives.

By sharing experiences and working in groups, the student can expand his understanding of his own family to include his school and his neighborhood. He can learn some of the social amenities and become a social creature. He can learn to talk to others, plan with others, and work with others. Soon he should be ready to explore the larger communities: the state, the nation, and the world.

When he becomes aware that he lives with groups of people all of his life, the student can understand that social studies is the study of man as he lives in his world. He, the student, learns to accept social standards so that he can be successful in life. The teacher should emphasize the fact that men are more alike than they are different.



science

Using the discovery approach, the teacher can involve groups of students in science experiments. Experiments can be performed in any classroom, but they should be well structured and carefully supervised by the teacher. If based upon elements in the pupil's environment, group experiments can stimulate student interest in neighborhood problems. Assignments should not include reading alone but should include maximum student involvement in the actual handling and manipulation of science materials.

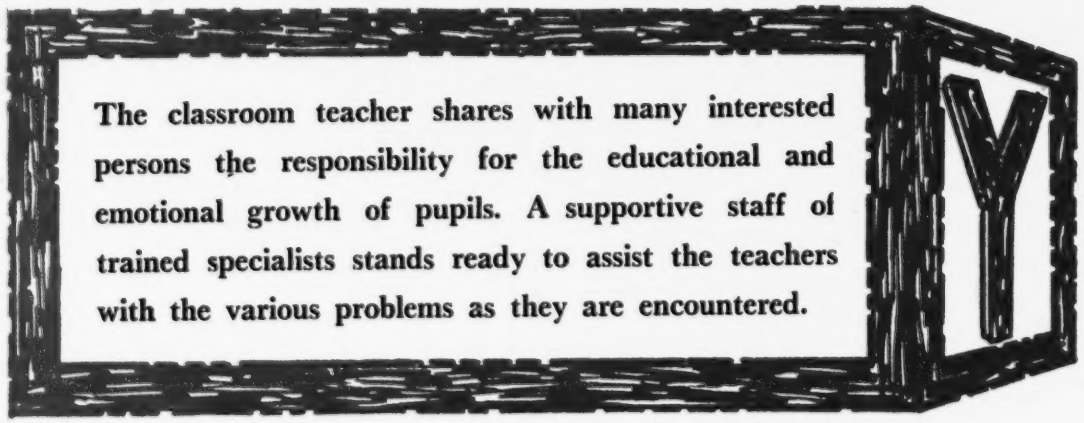
mathematics

Another school subject with which the disadvantaged pupil often has difficulty is mathematics. He has difficulty memorizing the abstract facts which he needs to solve problems.

Slower learning pupils need many experiences in manipulating concrete materials and studying pictures before they can move to the abstract level of learning. They require close teacher supervision in all phases of their work. Some practical suggestions are as follows:

- **Provide the pupils with manipulative materials** such as bundles of sticks, plastic beads and discs, geometric wood forms, and the abacus to help them to develop the idea of number.
- **Use the overhead projector** to move into the picture stage of numbers.
- **Make game-like assignments** with sharply defined rules.
- **Choose a few number combinations** at a time for pupils to master.
- **Provide much practice** and cumulative review for understanding.
- **Minimize the vocabulary** of mathmatics so that the pupil does not become **word-bound.**
- **Prepare assignments for the individual** so that he can succeed at each task.

THE SUPPORTIVE STAFF


The classroom teacher shares with many interested persons the responsibility for the educational and emotional growth of pupils. A supportive staff of trained specialists stands ready to assist the teachers with the various problems as they are encountered.
Y

counselor

The **counselor** is one specialist who can be of great value to the teacher in increasing pupil motivation, fostering pupil adjustment and self-understanding, and determining individual remedial needs. The guidance staff can make available such information on individual students as achievement test scores and anecdotal and cumulative records.

The counselor ascertains pressures in and out of the school that might be contributing to the pupil's absence, failure, or other problems. Pupils may be referred to a counselor by teachers, school nurses, principals, parents, or social agencies. After visiting in the home of the referred pupil, the counselor can interpret to the teacher the home conditions and attitudes of parents.

In some cases, the counselor may find students and families with problems which cannot be resolved by school services. These cases are referred to the appropriate community agencies. A list of these agencies may be found in both the counselor's office and the nurse's office.

building principal

The effective **building principal,** aware of major problems confronting teachers, can be a source of help to the teacher. He should maintain realistic classroom expectations so that the teacher is not forced to choose between pupils' needs and unrealistic goals. One of the principal's most important responsibilities is to act as liaison between the teachers and the supportive staff.

school nurse

The **school nurse** can provide teachers with a checklist of conditions which might indicate that the pupil has health problems. The checklist might contain questions similar to those which follow:

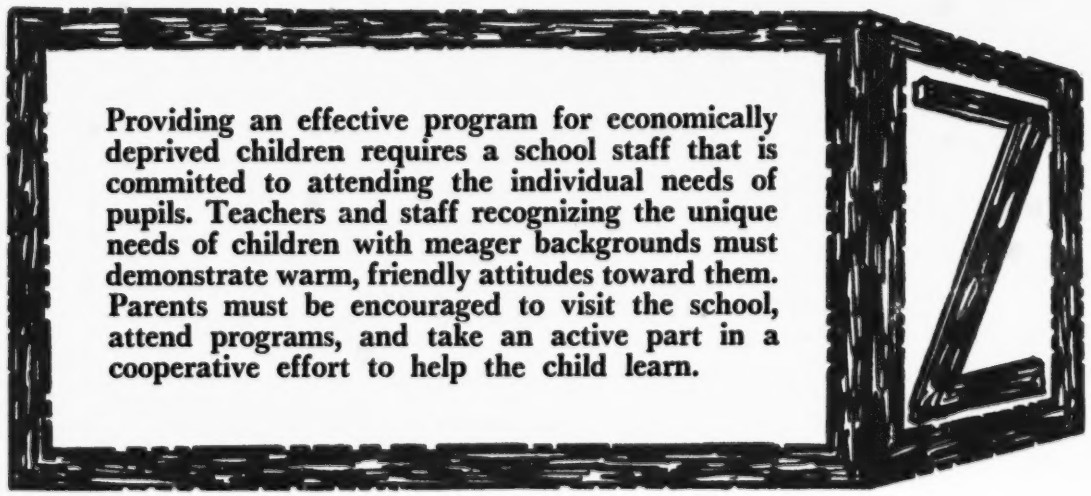
- *Does the child squint?*
- *Does he hold the book close to his face while reading?*
- *Can he see the chalkboard?*
- *Does he turn his head to hear you?*
- *Is his skin clear or quite blemished?*
- *Does he appear restless, sleepy, or lethargic?*

The nurse must depend on the teacher for referral and for the observation necessary for identifying students in need of health services.

superintendent

The **superintendent** is the most influential member of the supportive staff. Working with the Board of Education, the superintendent has the greatest potential influence for improving instruction and working conditions for teachers.

conclusion


Providing an effective program for economically deprived children requires a school staff that is committed to attending the individual needs of pupils. Teachers and staff recognizing the unique needs of children with meager backgrounds must demonstrate warm, friendly attitudes toward them. Parents must be encouraged to visit the school, attend programs, and take an active part in a cooperative effort to help the child learn.
Z